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Summary record of the 304th meeting
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Chair: Ms. Degener

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by parties to the Convention under article 35 (*continued*)

Initial report of Cyprus (CRPD/C/CYP/1; CRPD/C/CYP/Q/1 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Cyprus took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Ms. Flourentzou-Kakouri** (Cyprus), introducing her country's initial report (CRPD/C/CYP/1), said that Cyprus had signed the Convention in 2007 and ratified it in 2011. The country's report had been submitted to the Committee in 2013 and the replies to the list of issues (CRPD/C/CYP/Q/1/Add.1) in late 2016. Together, the two documents provided an overview of the efforts that Cyprus had made to implement the Convention.

3. The signing of the Convention had been partly responsible for the country's decision to establish the Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities and its adoption of the first National Disability Action Plan (2013-2015). The Convention also served as a road map for future action, such as the implementation of the second Plan covering the years 2017-2020, which was currently in development.

4. The Constitution of Cyprus safeguarded the fundamental rights of all persons and enshrined the principle of equality for all. Cyprus had a comprehensive legal framework for the protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities. The law under which the Convention had been ratified and incorporated into the domestic legal order took precedence over any other Cypriot laws.

5. Twenty-one per cent of Cypriots over the age of 15 had reported long-term activity limitations as the result of a disability. Information on persons with disabilities in Cyprus was collected in a number of databases, both governmental and non-governmental, and a national database on disability was currently being developed.

6. Women and girls with disabilities were entitled to the same support services and benefits as all persons with disabilities. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Cyprus was a party, afforded additional protection to children with disabilities. In some sectors, considerable progress had been made on accessibility. Cypriot airports, for example, had received a European award for their efforts in that regard and a number of beaches, identified on the website of the Cyprus Tourism Organization, had been made fully accessible. In other sectors, improvement was still needed.

7. The Cypriot authorities were aware that it was necessary to bring existing legislation into line with article 12 of the Convention. The completion of work on drafting a bill introducing the concepts of supported decision-making and self-advocacy, which had involved consultations with organizations of persons with disabilities, was expected in 2017.

8. Community-based mental health services made it possible, to a large extent, to avoid the involuntary institutionalization of persons with disabilities. Cyprus had only one institution, where 74 persons were currently receiving treatment, to which patients with mental disabilities could be committed. Efforts to deinstitutionalize all such patients were under way.

9. Refugees had the same rights to social assistance and health care as Cypriot nationals. Social welfare benefits, including monthly allowances for home care, institutional care and attendance at day centres, enabled all persons with disabilities who would not otherwise have the means to do so to live where and with whom they liked. A number of day centres and homes, run by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and subsidized by the State, served persons with severe disabilities. In addition, the Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities offered a number of benefit schemes or services, not means-tested, to help offset the additional costs incurred by persons with disabilities and their families. The Ministry of Health had drafted a new bill on community mental health care and would shortly submit it to the Council of Ministers and the House of Representatives.

10. Most children with disabilities in Cyprus attended mainstream schools. Considerable efforts were made, such changes to teaching and learning arrangements and the use of assistive devices, to ensure that such children could profit from their classroom experiences. The small percentage of children with disabilities educated in the special classes offered in mainstream schools participated in extracurricular activities with their non-disabled peers. Separate special schools, which educated less than 1 per cent of the school-age population, were appropriately staffed and offered training programmes designed to facilitate the transition from school to work or to another vocational training institution.

11. In general, the residents of Cyprus enjoyed easy access to health care and all persons with disabilities were entitled to free emergency care at the country's public hospitals. Some persons with disabilities were also entitled to low-fee visits to general practitioners and specialists. Community mental health centres served both urban and rural residents of Cyprus, while the Mental Health Services for Children and Adolescents offered outpatient and community services in all the country's major cities.

12. A number of measures had been taken to help persons with disabilities gain access to the open labour market. Department of Labour employment counsellors, for instance, gave priority to persons with disabilities when conducting interviews for open positions and incentives to hire such persons were given to private sector employers. There was a quota system for employment in the public sector. Another government initiative focused on job creation, which was the most effective method of ensuring that persons with disabilities found employment.

13. Cypriots were protected from poverty by a guaranteed minimum income introduced in 2014. Persons with disabilities who met the eligibility requirements were entitled to up to €480 a month for their basic needs, in addition to rental and other allowances. Children with disabilities were entitled to those benefits regardless of family income. Invalidity pensions enabled recipients to offset a loss of income from work.

14. In the coming days, a major conference would be held in Nicosia to launch the new Council of Europe Disability Strategy 2017-2023. Such events were evidence of the country's commitment to making the rights of persons with disabilities a reality.

15. **Mr. Langvad** (Country Rapporteur) said that, although the State party had clearly recognized its obligations under the Convention, it seemed as though the Cypriot authorities expected the Convention to implement itself, if only they waited long enough. The National Disability Action Plan (2013-2015) had not been fully implemented not only, it appeared, because of a lack of resources but also because the Plan's drafters had not taken into consideration the possibility of unexpected obstacles. One reason for the unsatisfactory implementation of the Plan was, according to paragraph 14 of the replies to the list of issues, the severe understaffing of public services because of mass retirements, as if it could not have been foreseen that even civil servants got older.

16. It also seemed as if not all persons with disabilities in the State party were protected from discrimination on grounds of disability. A person who was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, for example, would not be a member of any of the groups targeted for social services or support and would thus be likely to be discriminated against because of his or her disability. In addition, it was necessary to protect the close relatives of persons with disabilities, who were not the primary recipients of support services, from possible discrimination on grounds of disability. Discrimination could take a number of forms and it should be addressed in every instance, such as when taxis charged more for carrying a wheelchair and younger persons with disabilities were forced to live in institutions for older people.

17. It was especially important to ensure that no one could be deprived of his or her right to vote or stand for election. The problem might seem minor, but persons with disabilities valued being seen as ordinary human beings, with the same rights as others.

18. He would welcome information on the involvement of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in preparations for the Nicosia conference mentioned by the head of the delegation and on the role that they were expected to play during the conference itself. It would also be interesting to know more about the involvement of such

organizations in the upcoming review of the State party's efforts to fulfil its sustainable development obligations at the high-level political forum on sustainable development. In addition, the State party should withdraw its outdated reservation to article 27 (1) of the Convention. In the present day, there was no reason not to assume that persons with disabilities could work anywhere.

Articles 1-10

19. **Mr. Chaker** said that he wished to know what efforts had been made to ensure uniform accessibility standards throughout the State Party. He would welcome information on the involvement of Cypriot organizations of persons with disabilities in the development of domestic and international accessibility standards.

20. **Mr. Basharu** said that he would welcome a comment from the delegation on the measures that the State party had taken to mainstream the principle of equality and non-discrimination and clear the bureaucratic and administrative hurdles standing in the way of the implementation of the Convention. In addition, he asked what specific steps had been taken to promote the rights of women and girls with disabilities and whether the State party had any mechanisms to address the multiple, intersectional forms of discrimination and gender-based violence to which women and girls with disabilities were susceptible. Statistical data on women and girls with disabilities subjected to violence and abuse would be particularly welcome.

21. He wondered what the State party did to ensure that children with disabilities were included in mainstream society and what opportunities they were given to express themselves on an equal basis with other children. It would be interesting to know how persons with disabilities and their representative organizations were consulted on or involved in awareness-raising campaigns in the State party. Information on the efforts that had been made to encourage the media to portray persons with disabilities in a positive light would also be welcome.

22. **Mr. Martin** asked whether persons with disabilities, including intellectual disabilities, had been part of the making of the National Disability Action Plan (2013-2015).

23. **Mr. You** Liang said that he would welcome an explanation of the extent to which the provision of reasonable accommodation was required outside places of employment. If it was not required in other spheres of activity, the delegation should describe the State party's plans to broaden the scope of the requirement. In addition, the delegation should indicate whether the denial of reasonable accommodation was considered an act of discrimination on the grounds of disability and what consideration it gave to the Sustainable Development Goals, targets 10.2 and 10.3 in particular, in its efforts to implement article 5 of the Convention.

24. He wondered what specific measures were being taken to eliminate intersectional discrimination against women and girls with disabilities and to ensure their participation in public and political life. Were there any links between the State party's efforts to implement article 6 and its efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5, on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls?

25. **Mr. Babu** said that he would welcome an update on the range of horizontal social services available in Cyprus, in particular as they related to combating violence against girls and women with disabilities. He wished to know in what ways persons with disabilities and their representative organizations were involved in the planning and implementation of the awareness-raising campaigns mentioned in paragraph 30 of the replies to the list of issues.

26. **Mr. Ishikawa**, commending the State party for its use of a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis in its report (paras. 7-18), said that he would welcome an indication of the legal measures that had been taken or were planned to ensure that refugees in Cyprus had equal access to disability support schemes. It would also be interesting to know what awareness-raising campaigns had been launched since the ratification of the Convention, with a view to promoting a human rights-based

understanding of the Convention and of persons with disabilities among civil servants and the public at large.

27. **Mr. Lovászy** asked whether there were effective sanctions in place for denial of reasonable accommodation and whether the delegation could provide information on any ongoing legal cases in that regard. A concise summary of legal precedents that had already been set in connection with discrimination on grounds of disability would also be welcome.

28. Regarding the State party's approach to defining disability, he asked what use was made of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health of the World Health Organization and whether the Cypriot authorities considered it to be in line with article 1 of the Convention. In addition, he wondered what means of transport other than buses would be equipped with systems providing accessible information to persons with disabilities.

29. **Mr. Kim** Hyung Shik asked whether the State party had earmarked economic resources for the implementation of the National Disability Action Plan (2013-2015). The delegation should also indicate to what extent the Cypriot Government had fulfilled its obligation to ensure the participation of persons with disabilities by consulting them and their representative organizations on matters concerning the implementation of the Convention, such as the preparation of the State party's report. In addition, he wondered how the State party intended to ensure that reasonable accommodation was provided for persons with disabilities when it did not appear to have defined exactly what the concept meant.

30. **Mr. Alsaif** said that he wished to know whether the State party had plans to allocate additional economic resources for the implementation of the new National Disability Action Plan. In addition, he wished to know whether the State party intended to take any measures other than the launch of the new Plan to implement the Convention and, if so, what those measures were. He would welcome examples of specific laws or regulations that had been amended as a result of the State party's ratification of the Convention. Information on the steps that had been taken to ensure that persons with disabilities and their representative organizations participated in the law-making process would also be welcome.

31. **Mr. Tatić** asked whether any of the cases reviewed by the Office of the Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights (Ombudsman) from 2004 to 2012 had involved complaints of multiple or intersectional discrimination faced by women or girls with disabilities. Turning to the issue of accessibility, he wondered whether the 80 low-floor, accessible buses providing public transport in Nicosia accounted for a significant percentage of the entire fleet of public buses and, if not, what plans had been made to ensure that more buses were fully accessible. In that connection, he wondered whether any of the complaints submitted to the Ombudsman had specifically related to the lack of accessible public transport. It would also be interesting to know whether any airport users had submitted complaints of discrimination on grounds of disability to the civil aviation authorities and whether personal assistance was available to persons with disabilities visiting public facilities in the State party.

32. **Mr. Kabue** said that, although Cyprus clearly had a long history of protecting the rights of persons with disabilities, it would be interesting to know what measures were being taken, in line with article 4 (4) of the Convention, to ensure that levels of protection were higher still. In addition, he wondered whether the steps taken by the State party to combat discrimination against persons with disabilities in Cyprus addressed all forms of discrimination on grounds of disability and whether "persons with special needs", a term used frequently in the State party's report and its replies to the list of issues, were the same as "persons with disabilities".

33. **Mr. Buntan** said that he wished to know what plans the Government had made to ensure that any decisions made after consultations with organizations that were not members of the Cyprus Confederation of Organizations of the Disabled were considered legitimate, in particular since it had appeared to consult them after failing to win support from the Confederation for a number of initiatives. He would welcome an indication of the

kind of support given to organizations of persons with disabilities to enable them to participate actively in policymaking.

34. He wondered whether the delegation could explain why the cases reviewed by the Ombudsman were more likely to involve complaints against government officials than against private sector establishments. It would be interesting to know whether that was, for example, because no private sector employers in Cyprus ever gave cause for complaint or simply because there were so few persons with disabilities working in the private sector. He asked whether the State party had a mechanism to monitor compliance with accessibility standards and what sanctions were imposed for non-compliance.

35. **Mr. Ruškus** asked whether the State party had any plans to redefine disability in such a way as to bring its definition into line with article 1 of the Convention, not least by acknowledging the role played by social and other barriers, whose interaction with a person's impairment could make it hard for him or her to participate in society on an equal basis with others. He also asked to what extent disability assessments took into account the needs of persons with disabilities for social participation.

36. Turning to article 7, he wondered what support was provided for children with disabilities and their families, including under the three-year action plans developed by the Commissioner for Children's Rights. In that connection, he would welcome information on the specific model used for early intervention processes. An indication of the measures that had been taken by the State party to include children with disabilities and their families in decision-making processes regarding the assessment and allocation of support would also be welcome.

37. **Mr. Rukhledev** asked what the status of sign language in Cyprus was, whether there were State programmes to train sign language interpreters and how many such interpreters there were in Cyprus, regardless of whether they provided interpretation services or were involved in the education of deaf children.

38. **The Chair** said that the Committee would welcome information on the measures taken to develop a human rights-based framework for the concept of disability, thus providing protection from discrimination on grounds of disability, and how those measures differed from legal or regulatory measures.

The meeting was suspended at 4.10 p.m. and resumed at 4.35 p.m.

39. **Ms. Flourentzou-Kakouri** (Cyprus) said that information and communication technology was used to inform persons with disabilities about the accessibility of such places as airports, beaches and archaeological sites. The Department of Antiquities, for instance, provided information on the accessibility of monuments, museums and other attractions.

40. Efforts to increase the number of low-floor, accessible buses, which accounted for around a third of the Cypriot bus fleet, were ongoing. The authorities were unaware of any official complaints regarding the lack of accessibility of public transport, one possible reason being that Cypriots generally used their own cars. The Government offered subsidies of up to €4,000 to help persons with disabilities buy and modify private vehicles. In addition, such persons could call a special line to book a journey by public transport on a fully accessible vehicle. Cyprus was working with other member States of the European Union on a proposal for a directive that would improve the functioning of the internal market for accessible products and services.

41. Mechanisms to monitor compliance with accessibility standards had been put in place. The Civil Aviation Department, for instance, monitored compliance at the airport, while monitoring the accessibility of buses was the responsibility of the Road Transport Department. She was unaware of any penalties that had been imposed for non-compliance.

42. Monthly allowances helped persons with disabilities employ personal assistants. In addition, the employment by organizations of persons with disabilities of social assistants, who provided personal services to the organizations' members was subsidized by the Government.

43. **Mr. Constantinou** (Cyprus) said that the Government was very sensitive to the issue of refugees with disabilities and recently had taken a high-level decision emphasizing that they should be treated on an equal footing with Cypriot citizens and should have access to allowances. Concerning the use of the term "special needs", he said that the term was widely accepted in many European and international forums and that the Government used it in communications with those forums to refer to students with general or specific learning disabilities or difficulties. The Government was aware of the Sustainable Development Goals and was taking them into consideration.

44. The Persons with Disabilities Act prohibited discrimination and established severe penalties for discriminatory acts, while, under an anti-discrimination law, the Office of the Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights (Ombudsman) had been established as the authority responsible for discrimination matters. Persons with disabilities wishing to lodge complaints or take legal action could do so through the courts or through the Office of the Commissioner, or by referring their case to the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe or, indeed, to the Committee.

45. In 2014, the Ministry of Education and Culture had introduced a code of conduct against racism for students and teachers, which also applied to discrimination against people with disabilities. The Cypriot media were forbidden to broadcast any content that promoted any form of discrimination and in some cases had been sanctioned and fined for breaching anti-discrimination regulations. Another factor that would bring about social equality was the gradual introduction of the national health system — due to be fully implemented by June 2020 — which aimed to provide universal coverage without discriminating on the grounds of nationality, religion, disability or any other characteristic.

46. Concerning women and children with disabilities, the Government had adopted three national laws establishing equal pay, equal treatment in the workplace and protection of maternity rights. Cyprus also adhered to the European Union strategy for equality between women and men, which sought to ensure equality in the labour market and equal pay, to combat gender violence and to promote gender equality, and was a party to the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the Istanbul Convention) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

47. Considering that women and children with disabilities were more likely to suffer abuse, a national child protection strategy had been put in place, and teachers and public officials were trained to recognize and report abuse. As part of that strategy, the Ministry of Education and Culture participated in the "Keep Me Safe" project designed to protect children with learning disabilities. Besides preventive actions designed to combat domestic violence, gender abuse and child abuse, social welfare services provided advice and assistance for persons needing to report abuse. The Mental Health Acts 1997-2007 protected women with disabilities from forced sexual and reproductive health procedures and Cyprus also had an independent Commissioner for Children's Rights with the executive authority to fine or otherwise penalize parties who violated the rights of children.

48. In the sphere of children's health care, early detection and intervention were a priority and efforts were under way to complement existing assessment and rehabilitation services at hospitals throughout the country, including the establishment of an early detection centre for neural development disorders such as autism. Early assessments for learning disabilities were available immediately upon the family's request, at both public or private health-care facilities, and were also carried out by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Parents were kept informed and invited to be present during assessment procedures and children were asked for their consent to assessments and subsequent therapies. The Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities allocated funding to NGOs that provided professional rehabilitation services for children from birth until late adolescence and the Committee for the Protection of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities provided early childhood intervention services for about 1,000 families. Services were also provided for children at the School for the Blind and the School for the Deaf. Three separate allowances, totalling €848 per month, were available for children with disabilities to have access to the rehabilitation of their choice in the private sector.

49. In relation to awareness-raising, the delegation wished to highlight the fact that the Convention had been translated and was being taught to children in all schools, with the participation of Organizations of persons with disabilities, and the President of the Cyprus Paraplegic Organization had visited schools and taken part in classes on how the Convention could be implemented in Cyprus. Moreover, the Cyprus Academy of Public Administration had organized workshops with the Ombudsman, the Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities and organizations of persons with disabilities to promote awareness of disability rights among civil servants and to discuss how to improve services. The aim was to eliminate or minimize discrimination, to foster employment and education for persons with disabilities and to teach children about disabilities and the Convention.

50. **Ms. Constantinidou** (Cyprus) said that the Government respected the right of deaf persons to have their own means of communication and in 2006 had enacted the Recognition of Cyprus Sign Language Act. Since then, a scientific committee of experts had recorded the evolution of the official language and developed a core vocabulary and a grammar book. Sign language interpreters were provided for hard-of-hearing children and adults in order to improve the various aspects of their lives and the Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities subsidized the Cyprus Federation of the Deaf to provide services for those requiring them. Most children who were hard of hearing were taught orally, although there were cases in which the Ministry of Education and Culture offered sign language interpreters or the teachers had knowledge of sign language. Adult education centres offered classes in sign language.

51. **Ms. Fhourentzou-Kakouri** (Cyprus), responding to the question on reasonable accommodation, said that annex 2 to the replies to the list of issues listed all Cyprus laws relating to disability, some of which had been amended and updated. The general law protecting the rights of persons with disabilities in Cyprus was the Persons with Disabilities Act, which even prior to ratification of the Convention had applied the concept of reasonable accommodation in keeping with the directives of the European Union. The Act, which established the obligation to take reasonable accommodation measures in all sectors providing goods and services to persons with disabilities, so long as such measures did not entail a disproportionate burden, had been amended in 2014 to exclude the factors constituting a disproportionate burden and thus widen the concept of reasonable accommodation. Those who failed to take reasonable accommodation measures faced fines of up to €7,000 and could be sentenced to up to 6 months' imprisonment.

52. Since the ratification of the Convention, all new legislative acts, schemes and programmes concerning disability issues were obliged to take into account the definition of disability under the Convention, which the Government regarded as superior to any definition given in national law. However, given that persons with disabilities had a variety of needs and were entitled to different benefits and services, that definition was typically adjusted to the scope of the specific legislation in question. For example, the 2014 Guaranteed Minimum Income Act stipulated that a minimum income was payable — in addition to disability allowance — to persons with disabilities as defined under the Convention, provided that they had been certified as having a severe disability after an independent assessment. Similarly, entitlement to public-sector employment under the quota system was limited to persons facing severe difficulties in finding work in the open labour market.

53. Assessing and certifying disability presented a complicated challenge. In that regard, the Government believed that the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health was a helpful, scientific and effective tool that was in line with the approach of the Convention. Accordingly, the Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disability had introduced a new assessment system that encompassed all types of disability and incorporated a human rights approach. All persons applying for benefits or services underwent an independent assessment.

54. The Government acknowledged that it had implemented only 40 per cent of activities under the National Disability Action Plan but hoped to improve on that performance in the next Plan. One limiting factor had been the understaffing of public services, caused by the retirement of civil servants and a recruitment freeze imposed as a

result of the island's severe financial crisis. As a result, several departments dealing with disability issues had seen a reduction in their capacity to implement the Plan. However, some important results had been achieved. Eight persons with disabilities had been discharged from a psychiatric residential institution and placed in their own homes in the community, with support services. Following an accessibility survey of all government buildings, improvements had been carried out. Moreover, the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance had developed a new mechanism to assess the employment capabilities, preferences and interests of children with disabilities in their final year of school, in order to enhance their access to vocational training, supported employment programmes, subsidized entrepreneurship schemes and the open labour market. Fortunately, Cyprus had officially emerged from its financial crisis and discussions on the second National Disability Action Plan were under way, in the hope that the improved climate would afford greater funding opportunities.

55. Organizations of persons with disabilities continued to be involved in the decision-making process and in the development of policies and measures through regular meetings with government departments and ministers and consultations in working groups and workshops. The Government was under a legal obligation to consult the Cyprus Confederation of Organizations of the Disabled before taking any decision affecting persons with disabilities, but it also consulted widely with other representative organizations, regardless of their membership of the Confederation. The Confederation and the other organizations had been involved in drafting the initial report and the National Disability Action Plan, but in June 2015 they had withdrawn from the process, claiming that the meetings were unsatisfactory and ineffective. In fact, the organizations' involvement in working groups on the development of legal measures had been very effective and led to the adoption of new laws. The Government did not believe that withdrawal was a solution and had invited the organizations to provide suggestions for the development of the second Plan.

Articles 11-20

56. **Mr. Lovászy**, regretting that the replies to the list of issues did not provide data on the involuntary treatment of persons with disabilities, said that the delegation should describe the specific legal and procedural safeguards against such treatment that were available, including for persons with disabilities living in institutions.

57. **Mr. Basharu** said that he would like to know whether any measures or mechanisms were in place to accommodate persons with disabilities in situations of risk or humanitarian emergencies, with information provided in accessible formats for blind and deaf persons, including Braille, sign language or hotlines. He would also appreciate information on measures to ensure effective access to justice for persons with disabilities, including improvements in the physical environment of courts, prisons and police stations and the provision of information in accessible formats. The delegation should also describe any measures being put in place to provide mobility aids and assistive devices and to facilitate the duty-free procurement of such items if imported from abroad. What training in the use of mobility aids and assistive devices was given to persons with disabilities and their teachers?

58. **Mr. Abaif** said that the Committee would be grateful for information on whether women and children with disabilities were subjected to intrusive therapy or other medical treatment without their free and informed consent and on whether such practices were initiated through supported decision-making.

59. **Mr. Martin** said that the delegation should clarify whether there was an organization of persons with disabilities in Cyprus that was run by persons with intellectual disabilities, or whether those persons were part of another organization. More details of the draft law introducing self-advocacy and supported decision-making were needed, such as why further consultation was deemed necessary, whether or not persons with intellectual disabilities would be included in that consultation and whether consultation-related information would be available in accessible formats. The delegation should also describe the assistance provided to persons with intellectual disabilities in the justice system with regard to support and communication. Lastly, he wondered how the State party planned to

ensure that persons still living in institutions could move into the community and exercise their Convention rights.

60. **Mr. Tatić** said that he would welcome an explanation of how the Persons with Disabilities Act had been implemented in practice, including figures on the number of individuals and entities that had been fined or given prison sentences for discriminating against persons with disabilities. Given that the law providing for supported decision-making and for the repeal of guardianship and substitute decision-making was still under consultation and had not yet been adopted, he wished to know what practical possibilities were available for persons with disabilities, especially persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities, to receive supported decision-making in exercise of their legal capacity.

61. Considering the State party's acknowledgement that the Mental Health Acts still allowed for the involuntary internment of people with disabilities, he asked whether the Government planned to amend the Acts and harmonize them with the Committee's interpretation of article 14. Lastly, in respect of the financial crisis that had struck Cyprus and the strain that it had placed on household budgets, he wondered whether the State party had a mechanism to ensure that the social benefits and allowances intended for the independent living of persons with disabilities were actually used to that end and not for any other purpose.

62. **Mr. Buntan** said that he wished to learn whether the State party had developed a comprehensive plan on disaster risk reduction in accordance with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction that considered disability inclusion in all aspects of its planning, implementation and monitoring, including prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. While Cyprus was to be congratulated on its progress in the training of police officers and judges, he wished to know whether there was there any record of persons with disabilities practising law or serving in the judiciary and thus creating better access to justice for persons with disabilities. Lastly, he asked whether the small homes that were being built in the community for persons with disabilities in fact amounted to smaller institutions, rather than allowing persons with disabilities to live independently and to choose their residence.

63. **Mr. Babu** said that the delegation should clarify the statement in the replies to the list of issues that police officers at all hierarchical levels had received empirically and scientifically supported training. Did such training include alternative communication skills, such as Braille or sign language? He also wished to know what training was provided for police and law enforcement agencies in dealing with persons with disabilities during arrest, custody and investigations.

64. **Mr. Kim** Hyung Shik said that the information provided in relation to article 19 described traditional welfare benefits while recognizing the right of persons with disabilities to exercise their choice for independent living. However, more details were needed about residents in institutions, in particular how many of them had been able to take up independent living in the community. Financial assistance alone would not ensure independent living unless it was backed up by community support, decent accommodation, employment opportunities and the provision of personal assistance.

65. **Mr. Parra Dussan** asked whether the draft law on legal capacity envisaged any changes to the model of supported decision-making and whether the training of judges had been supplemented by the development of guidelines on access to justice, including protocols for dealing with specific disabilities, as was the case in other countries.

66. **Mr. Kabue** said that he, too, would like to know what measures, other than financial support, were being taken to enable people to live independently in society and not be seen as a burden within their community. He wondered whether the delegation considered the allowance of €317 for the employment of personal assistants to be adequate.

67. **Mr. Yue** Liang said that, since advanced technologies had already begun to change the lives of persons with disabilities and would utterly transform the traditional concept of rehabilitation, the Committee wished to know whether the State party had devised a programme to incentivize innovation in assistive technologies. He also wondered whether

deaf persons could qualify for a driving licence and, if so, what kind of training was provided.

68. **Mr. Chaker** said that he would like to know whether the Mental Health Acts accepted or allowed sterilization and whether the State party was able to allocate sufficient financial resources to help persons in need of 24-hour assistance.

69. **Mr. Langvad** asked what measures were being taken to ensure that no person with disabilities could be subjected to medical trials involving non-approved medicines or treatments without their full and informed consent. He also wished to know how the State party ensured the recording and availability of data concerning the number of cases of coercive and involuntary treatment of persons with disabilities.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.